

Is the Christmas Story relevant today?

These images were created by The Salvation Army to be used as a Christmas window display at the International Headquarters in London. The hope is that people will see the images and reflect on the fact that some of the difficulties faced 2,000 years ago by the people in the Christmas story are still affecting thousands of people today.

Here are a range of different ideas for how these images could be used as learning aids in your secondary RE or Humanities lessons.



Group Discussion Activities

- Give groups an image each and cover up the headlines. Ask pupils to discuss in their groups how the Bible verse could relate to things that are happening in the world today. Uncover the headlines and see how this compares with their initial thoughts.
- Give groups one of the images and five minutes to discuss and write down on a big sheet of paper how the images made them feel, one thing they tell us about Christmas and one question they have about the image. Groups could then swap and add to the previous group's ideas until they have done the same for all four images. Use the feedback to lead a group discussion.
- Give groups or pairs one of the images and ask them to first focus on the newspaper articles and think about what sort of emotions the people in the articles are likely to be feeling. Then ask pupils to think about how Mary or Joseph would be feeling at this point. Pupils to feed back thoughts to the group.
- Give pupils one image at a time in the order that the events happened in the Bible. The pupils could then complete an emotions graph for Mary and for Joseph, using the themes of the articles in the images to help them. Ask for feedback on how they felt and why.

Possible Discussion Questions

- Why has someone created these images?
- What do these images tell us about what Christians believe about God's character?
- Do these images portray God as present in people's suffering or absent? Why?
- Do these images change the way you think about the Christmas story? Why?
- Do the articles in the images tell us anything about what it would have been like for Mary?
- Do the articles in the images tell us anything about what it would have been like for Joseph?
- Are the problems Mary and Joseph faced 2,000 years ago in the Christmas story still affecting people today? Why?
- From these images, what is the message of the Christmas story?

Artwork

- After discussing the images, ask the pupils to read the Christmas story and pick a verse to make their own Christmas story piece of artwork including newspaper headlines and articles. Pupils could explain how the picture links to what is happening in the world today.
- Discuss how these images use old newspaper articles to create beautiful Christmas decorations. Pupils could create their own decorations using newspapers or recycled rubbish to show the contrast between the hope and suffering seen side by side in the Christmas story.

Drama

- Give each group one of the images and ask them to discuss how the newspaper articles show what this part of the story might look like today. Pupils then have to put together a drama piece that depicts this part of the story in the modern day. Get the groups to perform in the order that they happened in the Bible. You could go on to discuss whether this has changed the way any of the pupils think about the Christmas story.
- Give groups the four images. Explain that they are going to perform a drama from Mary's or Joseph's point of view. Explain that this is to be set today and that they will need to look at and discuss the articles that are in the images to help them see how this could be set today and how Mary or Joseph might be feeling at this point. (You may want to complete the emotions graph mentioned in the group discussion section first.)
- In pairs pupils could write a piece of poetry or spoken word to perform about one of the images. This could be about the whole Christmas story